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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE
11 January 1961

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CURRENT INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Primary elections in Kenya, 18-23 January 1961;
Legislative Council elections, 20-27 February 1961

1. Offices to be filled:

Of the 65 elective seats in the new Legislative Council, 53 are to be filled in the February elections. Voting is to take place on the basis of a common roll, with the franchise limited only by a few low educational and financial qualifications. Of the 53 seats, 33 will be contested on an open basis and in effect are guaranteed to Africans. The remaining 20 seats are reserved for the various ethnic minorities--10 for Europeans, 8 for Asians, and 2 for Arabs. Contestants for these seats must obtain the approval of at least 25 percent of their own racial groups in the January primaries before going on to the February elections in which Africans in most cases will have a decisive voice in the outcome. There will be no primaries for the open seats.

The directly elected members of the Legislative Council are to elect 12 "national members"--four Africans, four Europeans, three Asians, and one Arab. In addition, the governor has the right to nominate other members in order to ensure an effective working majority.

2. Parties participating:

The Kenya African National Union (KANU) is basically a coalition of leaders from the Kikuyu and Luo tribes, the two largest groups in Kenya. It has been the more extreme of the two African parties in its demands for early independence and a reduction of European influence in the Kenya Government. Recently, however, party President James Gichuru and Secretary General Tom Mboya have

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attempted to reassure white settlers and investors of the continuing importance of the Europeans to the country. The party contains a so-called "ginger" faction, consisting mostly of young Luos, which favors a more militant approach to the independence and racial questions. KANU has had considerable success in identifying itself as the party of ex-Mau Mau leader Jomo Kenyatta, a development which is adding to its popularity among radical Africans.

The Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU) appears to be largely a defensive alliance of minor tribes against KANU's Kikuyu-Luo coalition. Although its potential supporters are about equal in number to those of KANU, KADU seems to be lagging behind its rival in actual membership. Its leadership lacks the dynamic quality of KANU's, its heterogeneous membership interferes with party unity, and its moderate program has restricted its popularity to the relatively conservative portions of its tribal base.

The New Kenya party, led by Michael Blundell, is the political vehicle for moderate Europeans. Blundell and his followers have recognized the inevitability of further concessions to African political aspirations and have expressed their willingness to work with an African-dominated government. They hope that by keeping African good will the Europeans will retain some measure of influence as Kenya moves toward independence.

The Kenya Coalition, led by Sir Ferdinand Cavendish-Bentinck, is a right-wing party which is attempting to put a brake on further concessions to Africans. It has absorbed the United party, whose delegates to the February 1960 constitutional conference were the only ones who refused to agree to the present constitution.

There are a variety of groups representing Asians and Arabs, the most important of which are the Kenya Indian Congress and the Moslem League. In general, these communities have in the past avoided giving strong support to either Europeans or Africans. At present, however, they are tending to support the rising African parties.

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4. Present party strengths:

The last Legislative Council elections took place before the present party alignments emerged, and allegiances of many members are doubtful. KANU claims eight of the 14 directly elected African members. Information on European members is unavailable.

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5. Principal issues:

The principal issue is the pace of African advancement. Both KANU and KADU are urging the early creation of a chief ministership similar to that held by Julius Nyerere in Tanganyika; there is general outward agreement that the post should go to Kenyatta, although most of the other leaders doubtless hope to attain it themselves. The European parties and the British Government have so far remained adamantly opposed to African demands for the release of Kenyatta and his participation in government.

Both African parties are urging the rapid opening of the "white highlands"--the principal area of Kenya's cash-crop agriculture--to farmers of all races. When talking to Africans, most of the African leaders tend to make vehement demands for action verging on outright expropriation of European farms, only to back down on these demands in later statements to European audiences. As a result, the Europeans have no clear idea of the land policies of either KANU or KADU--particularly KANU's--and are highly nervous about their future in the country,

Kenya's deteriorating economic situation is coming in for increasing comment and is acting as a brake on KANU's more moderate leaders. Mboya and Gichuru appear concerned over loss of overseas confidence in the colony's finances and have attempted to reassure prospective investors, while simultaneously attempting to preserve the party's image as the most assiduous African nationalist organization.

British military and naval bases in the colony have become an emotional issue for most Africans. Until recently, Mboya and other KANU members have urged Britain's outright expulsion; however, with the exception of the "ginger" group, most of the party's leadership seems reconciled to attempting to negotiate Britain's military status in the colony.

6. Background:

The elections are the result of Britain's recent willingness to make substantial concessions to Africans in its East African territories. The February elections will be the first in Kenya to have a common voting roll, and the

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Legislative Council to be convened in March will be the first with an African majority. The 12-member executive council (cabinet) is to be composed of four ex-officio members, including the colony's chief secretary who acts as chairman, and eight "unofficials" (elected and nominated members). The unofficial side is to be composed of four Africans, three Europeans, and one Asian.

7. Principal factors influencing the outcome:

Among Africans, tribal loyalties and intimidation are likely to be the determining factors in the outcome. KANU in particular has indulged in extensive strong-arm tactics, both in order to keep its own tribal elements in line and in an attempt to extend its influence among other African groups. Many Africans are also likely to be swayed by the Kenyatta issue and to vote for the party they believe represents him. For those living in overcrowded areas near the white highlands, the land issue is likely to assume importance.

White and Asian voters are likely to be swayed chiefly by their assessment of the relative merits of their various parties vis-a-vis the Africans. The results in these areas will depend in large measure on whether the electorate favors opposition to or accommodation with the Africans.

8. Informed opinion on outcome:

Most informed observers believe that KANU will obtain a plurality of the seats; however, it is doubtful that any one party will gain an absolute majority. Some form of African coalition is thus a possibility. Results in non-African constituencies are difficult to predict: if the non-African communities are disunited in their primaries, presumably a number of candidates will receive the necessary 25 percent of the total and go on to the elections, with the selection of the most liberal of these alternatives a likely result. However, Europeans in some areas have urged their followers to agree on one candidate in each constituency. If only one contestant receives 25 percent or more of the vote in the primaries, he is automatically declared elected. A successful non-African campaign along these lines could thus result in the election of a substantial minority opposed to cooperation with the African majority.


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9. Significance for US security interests:

Kenya is a key political and economic area in East Africa, and the United States has an interest in continued peaceful African advance there and in the preservation of the pro-West orientation of most of the present leaders. There is also an indirect American interest in the maintenance of Britain's military establishment, which is one of the largest British military concentrations south and east of the Suez Canal.

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